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Their testimony is evidently given in good faith; but its value rests, even more than on their veracity, on their competency as witnesses. There is an appetency for the marvellous, which unwittingly creates what it craves for and feeds upon; and we confess that strong suspicions of such an appetency have been suggested by the wonderful narratives of personal experience which are here recorded. At the same time, we cannot escape the conviction that there is a large class of actual phenomena underlying the pretensions of mesmerism, pseudo-spiritualism, and psychometry, mingled indeed with much more than their own bulk and weight of delusion and imposture, yet demanding to be sifted out, classified, and traced to their proximate causes, and to physical and psychical laws, under which they undoubtedly will one day find their true place, as no longer occult and marvellous, but as parts of the established course and order of nature.

34. — *Inside Out: a Curious Book.* By a Singular Man. New York: Miller, Matthews, and Clasback. 1862. 12mo. pp. 364.

THIS is a novel, full of strange incident, with a large admixture of artistical description, scenery-painting, and æsthetic, philosophical, and moral speculation and reflection. The style is overwrought, verbose, and euphuistic. The thought is much better than the expression, and is often original, striking, and weighty. It is a book that will severely try the patience of the reader, but he will not find his labor wholly unrewarded.

35. — *Our Old Home: a Series of English Sketches.* By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1863. 16mo. pp. 398.

WE have enough objective knowledge of the Old World, those of us who have not travelled in it, and the narrative of any new sight-seer who is nothing more is as vapid as the gossip of the street-corner. The interest which we now feel in a book about England, or France, or the Pyramids, is in precise proportion to the worth of the book as an autobiography, and to the worth of the life that it records. In this respect a narrative of experiences in a foreign land is more precious than it ever was before; for our enhanced familiarity with the background of the sketch enables us to enter with added zest into the self-consciousness of the writer.

By the standard of judgment which we have thus indicated Mr.

Hawthorne's "English Sketches" are unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in merit. We can hardly conceive of a book of nearly four hundred pages containing so little and so much, — so little of any mark or interest about men and places and things in England, and so much about himself in those aspects in which the personality of a man of genius is always gladdening, instructive, and inspiring. We do not believe that with the outward eye he saw a great deal. There are two or three bits of exquisite sky and landscape painting; but the few attempts at elaborate architectural description are professedly unfinished, and might as well have been unbegun. But there are inimitably happy outlines of scenes and spots, odd buildings and strange nooks, which had some specific relation of harmony or incongruity with the author's mind, — outlines not drawn from notes or from reminiscences painfully recalled, but phototyped from the very retina of the inward eye, and filled in with the very hues and shadings supplied at the moment by the author's taste, wit, sympathy, or disgust. As to the characters brought upon the stage, we see them, too, not in their own persons, but in the images reflected from the mirror curved and mottled with the intense idiosyncrasies of the writer, — now convex, now concave, — here distorting, there beautifying, — on which each figure was caught, and thence thrown upon the printed sheet. The two properties of the work which seem to us the most striking are its humor and its kindliness. The humor is unforced, we think generally unconscious. Things present themselves grotesquely to Mr. Hawthorne. He takes hold of them by some other than the usual handle, and offers to our view just the parts and aspects of them which it is conventionally fit to keep out of sight. It is a humor always delicate, frequently even serious, and never more manifest than when the writer is most in earnest. His kindliness, too, if not unconscious, is expressed unintentionally. There is, indeed, no little pretence of an opposite sort, an affectation (shall we call it?) of roughness and unsociableness; but it is very feebly maintained, — the ill-fitted mask keeps dropping from the face, in which we see the tokens of a tenderness of human fellow-feeling, such as it is equally impossible to counterfeit and to disguise.